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Chairman: Mr. MONGBE (Benin)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 96: INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT (continued) (A/48/182, A/48/338, A/48/359, A/48/430 and Add.1, A/48/484-S/26552, A/48/492, A/C.2/48/3, A/C.2/48/4)

1. Ms. OLSZOWSKI (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) stressed the vital linkage between education and population issues. The provision of education, child-care and reproductive health services would help to ensure that national objectives in the field of population did not end up legitimizing coercion. Noting that almost two thirds of the world's illiterates were women, particularly women of child-bearing age, she said that UNESCO was prepared to share its expertise in formulating programmes for education and gender equality. In that context, it had been invited to participate in inter-agency meetings organized by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in preparation for the Cairo Conference. UNESCO, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and UNFPA were also organizing a summit of nine heavily populated countries (Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Nigeria and Pakistan) which would be held in New Delhi from 13 to 16 December. The world's first education summit, it would focus on the achievement of universal primary education, reducing illiteracy and combating the population explosion and underdevelopment.

2. In opening the General Conference of UNESCO a few days earlier, the Director-General had set the tone for UNESCO's contribution to the Cairo Conference by stressing the key role of education in addressing population and development issues - a new kind of education that would develop each individual's creative potential and ensure a more equitable distribution of knowledge, technology and resources.

3. Mr. ZIARAN (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the annotated outline of the final document of the Conference (A/48/430/Add.1) did not focus sufficiently on development. Chapter II on principles must address the concerns of developing nations; respect for the sovereign right of all States to formulate and implement their population policies and recognition of the economic, social, cultural and political diversity existing in the world were of the utmost importance in that regard. The principles should also cover common responsibilities, international partnership and the right to development and stress the importance of the international economic environment in the implementation of population programmes.

4. Chapter III should emphasize the need for international partnership in the transfer of technology and for a flow of financial resources to developing countries for the implementation of Agenda 21 and the new action programme, and should mention the decline in the flow of official development assistance for development activities in the South. His delegation had difficulty with the mention of the illegality of abortion in Chapter VII (para. 49). Illegality of abortion must not be perceived as a barrier to reproductive health. In view of expatriates' potential contribution to the economic development of their countries of origin, the selected topics for recommendations in Chapter X.A should encourage support for the activities of the programme for the Transfer of Knowledge through Expatriate Nationals (TOKTEN) and for the promotion of

(Mr. Ziaran, Islamic Republic of Iran)

economic opportunities in the developing countries as a means of controlling undocumented migration. The Islamic Republic of Iran had long been host to the largest refugee population in the world. It had been a witness to the fact that assistance to refugees, especially political refugees, was influenced also by non-humanitarian considerations. Chapter X.D should address that problem. It should seek to ensure the security and protection of civilian populations under foreign occupation or during armed conflict, a need that was tragically illustrated by the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

5. Chapter XII should include a reference to international cooperation to assist developing countries in national capacity-building and Chapter XV should specify that conditionalities would not be attached to bilateral and multilateral cooperation in population activities.

6. In view of the scant progress made in mobilizing financial resources for population activities during the last decade, the final document of the Conference should call for specific commitments with regard to financial contributions by the international financial institutions and the developed countries. Chapter XV.B was not strong enough in that regard. Moreover, paragraph 136 referred to "countries implementing structural adjustment" without identifying the categories of potential recipients, thereby implying that certain developed countries implementing structural adjustment might also be eligible for financial assistance. Paragraph 137 should specify that the objective of resource mobilization was to satisfy the growing resource requirements in the developing countries. As for follow-up mechanisms referred to in Chapter XVII, there was no need for new institutional arrangements, since the Economic and Social Council would coordinate the population activities of the United Nations system; and the Population Commission would monitor progress in the implementation of the agreements to be concluded at the Conference.

7. The Islamic Republic of Iran had established a National Committee on Population and Development to coordinate pre-conference activities and the implementation of the new action programme to be agreed upon in Cairo. It had already overseen the preparation of a national report on population activities. In September, a regional conference on family planning, co-sponsored by UNFPA, had been held in Tehran with a view to increasing public awareness and promoting regional cooperation in the field. As a first step in that direction, the Conference had decided to establish a regional centre on family planning in Tehran in order to train family planning experts.

8. Mr. SIRMA (Kenya) noted that 93 per cent of the population growth between 1985 and 1990 had occurred in developing countries and that, according to the 1993 Report on the World Social Situation (E/1993/50), an increasing share of that growth would occur in Africa. Africa's fast-growing population, and the fact that a high percentage of that population lived below the poverty line gave cause for concern and should be addressed by the Conference.

9. The annotated outline (A/48/430/Add.1) was useful but should contain more input by Member States. Kenya had already communicated its views to the secretariat of the Conference regarding national population programmes; multisectoral activities, including environmental, human settlements, water,

(Mr. Sirma, Kenya)

sanitation and afforestation; youth and adolescence; research; the role of the World Population Plan of Action and other instruments; family planning; information, education and communications; women, population and development; and health issues, including maternal and child care.

10. With the assistance of UNFPA and other multilateral and bilateral donors, developing countries had been implementing programmes designed to ensure that development kept pace with population growth. Since population programmes were costly for the Governments of developing countries, the Conference should examine the availability of resources. Adequate budgetary allocations must be made in order to finance the Conference, including its preparatory activities. His delegation hoped that the Preparatory Committee would become a subsidiary body of the General Assembly.

11. Mr. RYSINSKI (Poland) said that the Conference must be sufficiently universal to promote the interests of the international community and, at the same time, sufficiently specific to respond to the needs of various regions and groups of countries. It must take into account the cost of implementing its recommendations, perhaps by focusing on sources of financing, and indicate the mechanisms by which recommendations could be translated into action.

12. The Conference should take into account many possible approaches to population issues, e.g., individual, family, community, State, regional and international. The regional approach - whose importance was not sufficiently emphasized in the draft documents for the Conference - could help offset the tendency to deal with population issues from an essentially North-South viewpoint. Population issues were rather more complex, as illustrated by the problems of the transition countries in his own region. A closer examination of the implications of transition for both population and development, including the rapid economic, social and political changes experienced by the transition countries, would make the Conference and the annotated outline more balanced.

13. Mr. ZENNA (Ethiopia), after expressing his delegation's full support for the statement made on behalf of the Group of 77, said that it would be virtually impossible to tackle the population problem without first reducing the very high levels of poverty in the world, particularly in the least developed countries. His own Government had taken action to rehabilitate its war-ravaged social and economic infrastructure and to lay a solid foundation for sustainable development. The adoption of national policies on women and population were an important part of that exercise.

14. The objectives of his Government's population policy were to: reduce the total fertility rate by nearly one half and increase contraceptive use tenfold by the year 2015; reduce maternal, infant and child morbidity and mortality rates and promote the general well-being of the population; increase female participation at all levels of education; remove all legal and cultural barriers to women's full enjoyment of their economic and social rights, particularly with respect to property and gainful employment; ensure balanced population distribution patterns; improve agricultural productivity and introduce non-agricultural activities for purposes of job diversification; and mount a nationwide population information and education programme which stressed, inter alia, small family size and its relationship to human welfare and

(Mr. Zenna, Ethiopia)

environmental security. Those objectives, however, could be realized only in a favourable external economic environment, not in an environment that increased the indebtedness of the least developed countries, restricted their access to markets or depressed commodity prices and terms of trade. Special consideration should therefore be given to the least developed and environmentally most vulnerable countries, including Ethiopia, in accordance with the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s.

15. His delegation wished to express its appreciation to those countries which had contributed to the various trust funds established by preparatory activities for, and participation of developing countries in, the Conference.

16. Mr. BARAC (Romania) said that there had been a significant shift in attitudes in the last 20 years, and the great majority of countries were currently prepared to address population issues openly within the context of national policies and priorities. There was also a willingness to recognize the interrelationship of population with economic and social concerns, and its connection with the mainstream of political life.

17. The final document to be adopted at the International Conference on Population and Development should be based on the results and common understanding that had developed over the past decades and should present recommendations for future action in a practical and action-oriented manner. It should reflect the new international consensus on the full integration of population concerns into economic and social activities and sustainable development.

18. The Secretary-General of the Conference should submit the draft final document to the Preparatory Committee at its third session. That should not be a difficult task since many proposals for possible inclusion in the final document had already been made. The most important proposals included the recommendations of the five regional conferences and those of the six expert group meetings, the suggestions made by relevant intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, and the views expressed by delegations at the current session of the General Assembly.

19. The painful experiences of the populations of the countries in transition in Europe would have long-lasting effects for the future of those nations. It should be recognized that, in an interdependent Europe, any investment intended to have an impact on population was an investment in the stability and welfare of the entire continent. Romania was grateful for the assistance it had received from some Member States and from UNFPA and other international organizations which, through their advice and support, had helped increase awareness of existing population problems.

20. It was necessary to have a clear idea about how recommendations on population were to be implemented both at the regional and global level. International population programmes should be constantly adjusted to keep pace with developments.

21. Mr. BALZAN (Malta) said that, since social and economic problems were the root causes of violence and armed conflict, resolving such problems could be regarded as an exercise in preventive diplomacy. The forthcoming Conference would underscore the interdependence of population and development and the human dimension of development. Poverty, unemployment and indebtedness were just a few of the challenges facing developing States. The international community must create a global environment within which sustainable development could be achieved.

22. Malta welcomed the emphasis placed in the annotated outline on gender equality and empowerment of women. Women's participation in all areas of interaction, whether social, political or economic, should be encouraged. It also noted with satisfaction that issues relating to ageing populations would receive due attention at the Conference. In addressing specific issues related to family planning and health and mortality, particularly sexually transmitted diseases and AIDS, it was necessary to stress that education must be extended to all the people.

23. When not adequately addressed, socio-economic problems could ultimately threaten security. Whereas socio-economic problems were mainly felt by their direct victims, security problems were of concern to the entire international community. The enthusiasm with which the preparatory work was being conducted augured well for a successful conclusion of the Conference. The political will and commitment of Governments to translate proposed programmes into action remained to be ensured, however.

24. Monsignor DE ANDREA (Observer for the Holy See), commenting on the annotated outline (A/48/430/Add.1), said that the recognition of the human person, in his or her dignity and rights, must be clearly stated as the premise guiding all subsequent statements and proposals regarding population and development. The linkage of sustainable development, economic growth and sharing of the world's resources with the issue of population demanded a much stronger call to solidarity than that expressed in the annotated outline. It called for further action in favour of debt relief, technology transfers, educational and occupational opportunities and radical changes in the scandalous patterns of consumption and waste. His delegation shared the concerns expressed about the complex problems of migrations, indigenous peoples, the ageing population and disabled persons. All efforts to address those problems must consider the fundamental dignity and inalienable rights of each person in those groups.

25. His delegation took note of the references to unsafe abortion, extending reproductive rights with the possibility of including abortion as a family planning method and the proposal that laws regulating abortion or declaring it illegal in certain cases should be reviewed and possibly changed. It recalled that, in the discussions at the 1984 International Conference on Population, it had become clear that many countries did not consider abortion an appropriate means of family planning. Documents in preparation for the 1994 Conference should not attempt to override the consensus reached in 1984.

(Monsignor De Andrea, Observer, Holy See)

26. His delegation concurred that changes in attitudes and behaviour of both men and women were necessary conditions for achieving full gender equality, and insisted that the reproductive process was the responsibility of both spouses. Thus it was surprising that no mention had been made in the annotated outline of natural family planning. His delegation was also concerned to see that chapter V of the outline weakened the force of the language used in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by speaking of the family "in its many forms" and of social policies "supporting the plurality of family forms". Member States had well-established laws and policies to support the family, and they should not be called into question or weakened to accommodate new social trends or experiments.

27. Mr. MARKER (Pakistan) said that the final document must take into account the linkage of population with education, health, the environment, questions of migration and socio-economic development and the economic status of women and their control of reproductive decisions. Treating population in isolation would make population control programmes difficult to implement. His delegation was of the view that the list of principles should include the recognition of the sovereign right of each country to establish its own population policies and programmes in response to its own needs, while bearing in mind that national action, or the lack thereof, might have effects that extended beyond national boundaries.

28. The final document should also include a chapter dealing with the issue of population and the protection of vulnerable groups, particularly women and children, in times of disaster, civil unrest and war. Chapter III.A of the annotated outline did not present a complete picture of the development obstacles affecting a country's ability to achieve balanced growth. It must fully reflect the inequities of the external economic environment. In addition, population issues had economic, social, cultural and political dimensions which must be given appropriate consideration.

29. His delegation hoped that the Conference would articulate the methods for translating the final plan of action into specific goals for each country. The dreams of creating a prosperous Pakistan could not be realized unless the international challenge of population and development could be surmounted. Pakistan, therefore, attached the highest importance to the success of the International Conference.

30. Mr. BIAOU (Benin) said that the interaction among population, environment and development should not be viewed solely from the perspective of negative repercussions. The positive effect of demographic variables on environment and development was rarely emphasized. Documents A/48/430 and Add.1 had made a brief reference to the specific perspective of various indigenous groups; they were not alone in holding different viewpoints concerning the relationship between population, environment and development. In Africa, rural groups possessed vast knowledge which must be put to use in order to find lasting solutions and to improve the standard of living.

(Mr. Biaou, Benin)

31. Turning to Chapter VII of the annotated outline, he said that in order to succeed a population control policy must recognize the basic right of all couples and individuals to decide freely the number and spacing of their children. The respect of individual reproductive rights should prevail over the promotion and dissemination of family planning and programmes in human sexuality and gender relations must take into account the social, cultural, religious, economic and demographic diversity of the communities they were attempting to reach.

32. Regarding health and mortality, the documents made no mention of the devastating effects of such chronic diseases as malaria, onchocerciasis, dracunculosis on the health of the populations in many developing countries, especially in Africa. That omission should be corrected.

33. His delegation fully supported Economic and Social Council resolution 1993/76. It would also favour the combining of some chapters and sections of the annotated outline for greater clarity.

34. Mr. DOGANI (United Republic of Tanzania) said that a growing population required increased food production. However, while food production increased mathematically, population increased geometrically. That was particularly true of the developing countries, which spent a large part of their hard-earned foreign exchange to import food in order to supplement domestic production. Likewise, population growth led to pressure to provide more jobs, shelter, education, health services and other social services, which could be provided only through a substantial increase in financial resources, which the developing countries did not have.

35. The impact of population growth on the environment could not be ignored. Land degradation, deforestation and desertification had reached alarming proportions in most of the developing countries. That trend must be checked in order to avoid total disaster.

36. In January 1992, the United Republic of Tanzania had adopted a national population policy, giving priority to educating the people about the consequences of rapid population growth, with a view to raising the quality of the workforce and the people's capacity to promote its own development, protect the environment and improve the health and welfare of the population, in particular women and children. However, such a programme required heavy investment in terms of both human and financial resources, for which support from the international community would be required. His delegation was grateful for the support it had received from UNFPA and other United Nations organizations.

37. His delegation hoped that the forthcoming International Conference would address fully all the issues that his delegation had just raised and the many others that would be put forward by the various delegations.

38. Ms. KULAWAT (Thailand) said that the format of the chapters and sections of the annotated outline should reflect clear, action-oriented proposals and commitments. The current format might not provide the needed flexibility to achieve that goal. Moreover the focus should be on activities rather than recommendations.

39. The issues of the means of implementation should not be separated from the basis for action, objectives and recommendations. The sectoral chapters of the annotated outline (chapters III to X) should include elements of the chapters on cross-sectoral concerns. Her delegation fully agreed with the view expressed by the Secretary-General of the Conference that there should be references on the means of implementation throughout the final document. That by no means disregarded the need for the separate recognition of the issues covered in chapters XI to XVII.

40. Chapter VIII.C, paragraph 68 should be more specific and emphasize strategies for the prevention of the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and decreasing the demographic, health, social and economic impacts of the acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) epidemic while, at the same time, reflecting specific activities such as the formulation of a national policy and a national inter-sectoral AIDS control plan as part of the national development plan; improvement of public information, education and strategies for HIV prevention by changing social norms and behaviour and through population-related programmes, including family-planning services and child-health systems; provisions for human rights protection and relevant social support to assist persons with HIV/AIDS and their families; and the conduct of research and the monitoring and evaluation of the results of the various efforts.

41. Chapter VII.B should include a reference to the promotion of male participation in family planning, for Thailand's experience confirmed that male participation in family planning could not be disregarded, especially in societies that were endeavouring to incorporate gender issues into population strategies.

42. Her delegation fully supported the proposal made by the Secretary-General of the Conference with regard to the incorporation of 20-year goals into the outcome of the Cairo Conference.

43. With respect to the issue of money, the concept of global partnership in the field of population and development should go beyond aid. Success in addressing population concerns lay in shared responsibilities in taking the appropriate action. Her delegation agreed with the view that the focus should be on both chapter XIV, which dealt with national action, and chapter XV, which dealt with international cooperation; cross-references could be added elsewhere. Her delegation supported the approach of the Secretary-General of the Conference, which consisted in spelling out the expected cost in the areas of family planning and population data.

44. With regard to follow-up, her delegation agreed with the view that the success of the International Conference would depend on its implementation, monitoring and review at the national, regional and international levels.

(Ms. Kulawat, Thailand)

45. Finally, her delegation reiterated its full support for the creative and dynamic participation of non-governmental organizations in preparations for the Conference, in the Conference itself and in the implementation of its goals and in follow-up activities.

46. Mr. MSENGEZI (Zimbabwe) said that, the major topics around which the guiding principles for the International Conference would be organized should give priority to the Conference's theme, namely population, sustained growth and sustainable development. In order to stress that priority, paragraph 2 (c) of chapter II of the annotated outline of the final document should be moved up to become paragraph 2 (a).

47. In chapter III, the reference to the "aid-fatigue" of the international donor community should be more explicit and point out that there was increasing competition among countries and regions for development assistance and that there was a need for new and additional financial resources.

48. With regard to chapter IV, his delegation believed that the ultimate objective was not just the full integration of women into population and development programmes but their full integration into the entire development process. While his delegation welcomed the concerns and priorities that had been accorded to the section on the girl child, it considered that reference should also be made to a minimum legal age of consent.

49. With regard to Chapter V, he said that paragraph 29 contained a comprehensive list of vulnerable families and that paragraph 27 should be brought into line with it. Zimbabwe, like other countries, had a high proportion of children in its population. While that problem had been adequately stated in chapter VI.B, paragraphs 35 and 36 did not fully address how such imbalances could be corrected. There was a certain degree of duplication in chapters VII and VIII, which might require some rationalization and/or streamlining.

50. Finally, his delegation fully endorsed the remarks made by the Chairman of the Group of 77 with regard to the means of implementing any programme of action that might be adopted at Cairo.

51. Mr. MOHAMED (Sudan) associated his delegation with the statement made by the representative of Colombia on behalf of the Group of 77. Sudan devoted particular attention to population and development issues. It had participated in the regional population Conferences and had established a national committee which had drawn up a population strategy aimed at correcting the disparity between population growth and economic growth, inter alia, by stimulating economic growth, lowering infant and child mortality rates, eradicating illiteracy, combating harmful customs, raising school attendance rates for girls and reducing drop-out rates.

52. It was logical to link population to development and the environment and it was of vital importance to eradicate poverty from the developing countries. The recommendations of the Conference should focus on the right to development and a

(Mr. Mohamed, Sudan)

life in dignity and the right to acquire technology and the means to combat children's and endemic diseases. The Conference should also address the question of adequate funding for the implementation of its recommendations.

53. Mr. SOH (Republic of Korea) said that the issue of population should be a primary concern of the preparatory process for the International Conference on Population and Development, since that would prevent discussions from being diluted or side-tracked by undue attention to the related issues of development and environment. His delegation supported the proposal to change the status of the Preparatory Committee to a subsidiary body of the General Assembly.

54. The annotated outline incorporated most of the important points contained in the proposed conceptual framework adopted by the Economic and Social Council. The next step was to follow those points through with action-oriented, pragmatic recommendations. The Conference should set feasible goals and construct realistic methods for achieving them.

55. The distinctions between the various sections of chapter III were not entirely clear. It should be reorganized into two sections, the first dealing with population and sustained economic growth, the second dealing with population, sustainable development and environment. Population impact assessment mechanisms could be included under that heading as a selected topic.

56. In addressing the global challenges of explosive population growth and related issues, the international community must face reality. It had already encountered serious difficulties in raising the necessary financial resources for development cooperation, and even the most constructive plans would not be of much use without sufficient resources. The Preparatory Committee at its third session should address the question of mobilizing financial resources.

57. His delegation welcomed the decision of the Economic and Social Council to extend the third session of the Preparatory Committee to three weeks. Timely distribution of the draft final document of the Conference was essential for the success of the third session, and the Secretary-General's suggestion to circulate a final, unedited version of the draft in early January 1994 was most welcome.

58. Inter-agency coordination was essential for the success of the preparatory process, which should be further strengthened through the leadership of the Secretary-General of the Conference.

59. The achievements of the International Conference should be widely disseminated at all levels of society. Grass-roots participation should be an integral part of the efforts to reduce population growth, and an important first step would be to publicize widely the objectives and issues to be discussed at the Conference.

The meeting was suspended at 5.10 p.m. and resumed at 5.15 p.m.

60. Mrs. SADIK (Secretary-General of the International Conference on Population and Development) noted that many delegations had stressed the interrelation between population, sustained economic growth and sustainable development, while wishing to maintain the centrality of population in the deliberations and final document.

61. She also took note of delegations' desire for better harmonization of parts Two and Three, while preserving the separate identity of each part, and of the need for clear concise and action-oriented recommendations. Some delegations had even suggested that the emphasis should be on activities rather than recommendations. It had further been stressed that the interests and rights of individuals were central and that empowerment of women should be strengthened. There had been calls for more attention to be devoted to sexuality and family planning needs. Those issues would therefore be re-examined.

62. There had been strong support for the inclusion of a set of 20-year goals in the draft final document. The idea was not to set demographic targets or quotas. The goals would relate to infant, child and maternal mortality, universal access to and completion of primary school education, and universal access to family planning information and services. Such goals would require commitment from both the developing and the developed countries at the international and national levels, and should be further discussed during the forthcoming informal consultations. Attention should also be devoted to the demographic consequences of attaining development goals.

63. The secretariat would give careful consideration to the feasibility and advisability of costing the various recommendations or activities. The means of implementation should be given high - perhaps even highest - priority in the preparations and at the Conference. The secretariat would therefore focus on improving the chapter on resource mobilization.

64. It was recognized that the chapter on follow-up was inadequate as it stood; it would therefore receive more attention, as would the suggestion that the recommendations of the Conference should be taken into account by the Fourth World Conference on Women and the World Summit for Social Development. The secretariat would welcome specific proposals on follow-up, which would receive careful consideration by the Preparatory Committee at its third session.

65. She had been pleased to hear delegations express support for the holding of informal consultations in the remaining months before that third session and she welcomed the suggestion that appropriate background material should be provided in advance. However, such consultations would not be for the purpose of negotiating the draft final document.

66. Regarding the interrelationship between population, sustained economic growth and sustainable development, many delegations had felt that more attention should be devoted in the final document to consumption patterns and lifestyles, focusing on the shared responsibilities in that respect between developed and developing countries. Several had called for adequate reflection in the draft final document of the perspective and needs of the countries with economies in transition.

(Mrs. Sadik)

67. She agreed that the issue of indigenous people, population and development needed further attention.

68. Finally, she appealed to those countries which had not already done so to submit their national reports promptly so that their points of view and experiences could be drawn upon in the formulation of documents for the Conference, and said that the secretariat would welcome further views, particularly regarding ways of ensuring implementation of the recommendations at the country level.

69. Mr. JOMAA (Tunisia) requested that the concluding remarks of the Secretary-General of the Conference should be circulated to delegations.

The meeting rose at 5.40 p.m.